



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Request for Applications: The Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program

AGENCY: Forest Service, Agriculture (USDA).

ACTION: Request for applications.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service, State and Private Forestry, Cooperative Forestry staff, requests applications for the Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program (Community Forest Program or CFP). This is a competitive grant program whereby local governments, qualified nonprofit organizations, and Indian tribes are eligible to apply for grants to establish community forests through the fee simple acquisition of private forest land from a willing seller.

DATES: Interested local government and nonprofit applicants must submit applications to the State Forester. Tribal applicants must submit applications to the appropriate Tribal government officials. All applications, either hardcopy or electronic, must be received by State Foresters or Tribal governments by March 31, 2023, State Foresters or Tribal government officials must forward applications to the appropriate Forest Service Regional office or International Institute of Tropical Forestry by April 14, 2023.

ADDRESSES: All local government and qualified nonprofit organization applications must be submitted to the State Forester of the State where the property is located. All Tribal applications must be submitted to the equivalent Tribal government official. Applicants are encouraged to contact and work with the Forest Service Region or International Institute of Tropical Forestry, and State Forester or equivalent Tribal government official when developing their proposal.

Applicants must consult with the State Forester and equivalent Tribal government official prior to requesting technical assistance for a project. The State Forester's member roster may be found on <https://www.stateforesters.org/who-we-are/our-membership/>. All applicants must also send an e-

mail to SM.FS.CFP@usda.gov to confirm an application has been submitted for funding consideration.

State Foresters and Tribal government officials shall submit applications, either electronic or hardcopy, to the appropriate Forest Service Region/Institute contact noted below. Applicants are encouraged to contact and work with a Forest Service Region/Institute during the application process and before submission. Forest Service staff can assist with navigating program requirements, determining eligibility, providing guidance on allowable costs and match, and other questions.

Northern and Intermountain Regions

Regions 1 and 4

([ID](#), [MT](#), [ND](#), [NV](#), [UT](#))

Kris Tempel

USDA Forest Service

650 Wolfpack Way

Kalispell, MT 59901

406-210-1412 (mobile)

kris.tempel@usda.gov

Rocky Mountain Region

Region 2

([CO](#), [KS](#), [NE](#), [SD](#), [WY](#))

Todd Gardiner

USDA Forest Service

1617 Cole Boulevard, Bldg. 17,

Lakewood, CO 80401,

970-210-9103 (mobile)

todd.gardiner@usda.gov

Southwestern Region

Region 3

(AZ, NM)

Laura Moser

USDA Forest Service

333 Broadway SE

Albuquerque, NM 87102

928-607-6040 (mobile)

laura.moser@usda.gov

Pacific Southwest Region

Region 5

(CA)

Dana Walsh

USDA Forest Service

1323 Club Drive

Vallejo, CA 94592

530-450-5555 (mobile)

dana.walsh@usda.gov

(Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia and other Pacific Islands)

Katie Friday

USDA Forest Service

60 Nowelo St.

Hilo, HI 96720

808-785-5197 (mobile)

kathleen.friday@usda.gov

Pacific Northwest, and Alaska Regions

Regions 6 and 10

(AK, OR, WA)

Candice Polisky

USDA Forest Service

1220 SW Third Ave.

Portland, OR 97204

971-710-2346 (mobile)

candice.polisky@usda.gov

Southern Region

Region 8

(AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA)

Susan Granbery

USDA Forest Service

1720 Peachtree Rd., N.W., Suite 700

Atlanta, GA 30309

770-883-8925 (mobile)

susan.granbery@usda.gov

International Institute of Tropical Forestry

(PR, VI)

Magaly Figueroa

USDA Forest Service

Jardin Botanico Sur

1201 Calle Ceiba

San Juan, PR 00926-1119

787-309-9565 (mobile)

magaly.figueroa@usda.gov

Eastern Region

Region 9

(CT, DC, DE, IA, IL, IN, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, NH, NJ, NY, OH, PA, RI, VT, WI, WV)

Neal Bungard

USDA Forest Service

271 Mast Road

Durham, NH 03824

603-833-3287 (mobile)

neal.bungard@usda.gov

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For questions regarding the grant application or administrative regulations, contact Scott Stewart, Program Coordinator, 202-465-5038, scott.stewart@usda.gov or Margee Haines 202-384-7192, margaret.haines@usda.gov. Additional information about the Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program may be obtained at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/community-forest>.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact and work with the appropriate Forest Service Region/Institute contact during the application process before submission. Please contact the appropriate Forest Service Region/Institute if you would like review and feedback on your application and maps before submitting the final application. The final application is due to State Foresters or equivalent official or Tribal Governments by March 31, 2023. The Forest Service will host an informational webinar about the program and how to apply. For more information, please see the national webpage at the link above.

Individuals who use telecommunication devices for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Relay Service (FRS) at 800-877-8339 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., 24 hours a day, including holidays.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The purpose of the program is to establish community forests by protecting forest land from conversion to non-forest uses and provide community benefits such as sustainable forest management, environmental benefits including clean air, water, and

wildlife habitat; benefits from forest-based educational programs; benefits from serving as models of effective forest stewardship; and recreational benefits secured with public access.

Eligible lands for grants funded under this program are private forest that is at least five acres in size, suitable to sustain natural vegetation, and at least 75 percent forested. The lands must also be threatened by conversion to non-forest uses, must not be held in trust by the United States on behalf of any Indian Tribe, must not be Tribal allotment lands, must be offered for sale by a willing seller, and if acquired by an eligible entity, must provide defined community benefits under CFP and allow public access.

CFDA number 10.689: To address the goals of section 7A of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 2103d) as amended, the Forest Service is requesting proposals for community forest projects that protect forest land that has been identified as a national, regional, or local priority for protection and to assist communities in acquiring forestland that will provide public recreation, environmental and economic benefits, and forest-based educational programs.

Detailed information regarding what to include in the application, definitions of terms, eligibility, and necessary prerequisites for consideration can be found in the final program rule, published April 2, 2021 (86 FR 17302), which is available at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/community-forest/program>. Grant Application Requirements

1. Eligibility Information:

- a. Eligible Applicants. A local governmental entity, Federally Recognized Indian Tribe (including Alaska Native Corporations), or a qualified nonprofit organization that is qualified to acquire and manage land. Individuals are not eligible to receive funds through this program.
- b. Cost Sharing (Matching Requirement). All applicants must demonstrate a 50 percent match of the total project cost. The match can include cash, in-kind services, or donations, which shall be from a non-Federal source. For additional information, please see 36 CFR 230.6.

- c. DUNS Number. All applicants shall include a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number in their application. For this requirement, the applicant is the entity that meets the eligibility criteria and has the legal authority to apply for and receive the grant. For assistance in obtaining a DUNS number at no cost, call the DUNS number request line 1-866-705-5711 or register on-line at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>.
 - d. System for Award Management. All prospective awardees shall be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) prior to award, during performance, and through final payment of any grant resulting from this solicitation. Further information can be found at: <https://www.sam.gov/SAM/>. For assistance, contact Federal Service Desk 866-606-8220.
2. Award Information:

Individual grant applications may not exceed \$600,000 in requested federal funding, which does not include technical assistance requests. Grant applications must also include at least 50 percent non-federal cost share.

No legal liability on the part of the Government shall be incurred until funds are obligated by the grant officer for this program to the applicant in writing. The initial grant period shall be for two years, and acquisition of lands should occur within that timeframe. Lands acquired prior to the grant award are not eligible for CFP funding. The grant may be reasonably extended by the Forest Service when necessary to accommodate unforeseen circumstances in the land acquisition process. Written annual financial performance reports and semi-annual project performance reports shall be required and submitted to the appropriate grant officer.

Technical assistance funds, totaling not more than 10 percent of all funds, may be allocated to State Foresters or equivalent officials of Indian Tribes. Technical assistance, if provided, will be awarded at the time of the grant. Applicants shall work with State Foresters

or equivalent officials of Indian Tribes to determine technical assistance needs and include the technical assistance request in the project budget.

As funding allows, applications submitted through this request may be funded in future years, subject to the availability of funds and the continued feasibility and viability of the project. If an application is successful, it may be shared as a replicable model with future interested applicants.

3. Application Information:

Application submission. All local governments and qualified nonprofit organizations' applications must be submitted to the State Forester or equivalent official where the property is located by March 31, 2023. All Tribal applications must be submitted to the equivalent Tribal officials by March 31, 2023. Applications may be submitted either electronically or in hardcopy to the appropriate official. The State Forester's contact information may be found at: <https://www.stateforesters.org/who-we-are/our-membership/>.

All applicants must also send an e-mail to SM.FS.CFP@usda.gov for confirmation that an application has been submitted to the State Forester or equivalent Tribal official for funding consideration.

All State Foresters and Tribal government officials must forward all applications to the Forest Service by April 14, 2023.

4. Application Requirements:

The following section outlines grant application requirements:

- i. The application must be no more than eight pages long, plus no more than two maps (eight and half inches by eleven inches in size).
- ii. Documentation verifying that the applicant is an eligible entity and that the land proposed for acquisition is eligible (see § 230.2 of the final rule).

1. Eligible Entities include local governmental entities, federally recognized Indian Tribes, and qualified nonprofit organizations.

2. Eligible lands are private forest lands that are threatened by conversion to non-forest use; not held in trust by the United States; provide defined community benefits; and are at least five acres in size, suitable to sustain natural vegetation, and at least 75 percent forested.
- iii. Contact information for the project lead (name, title, phone number, email).
- iv. Applications must include the following, regarding the property proposed for acquisition:
 1. A description of the property, including acreage and county location;
 2. A description of current land uses, including improvements;
 3. A description of forest type and vegetative cover;
 4. A map of sufficient scale to show the location of the property in relation to roads and other improvements as well as parks, refuges, green/open space, urban natural areas, or other protected lands in the vicinity;
 5. A description of applicable zoning and other land use regulations affecting the property;
 6. A description of the type and the extent of community benefits that the property will provide, including to underserved communities (see Project Selection Criteria);
 7. A description of relationship of the property within and its contributions to landscape conservation initiatives, as well as any environmental justice initiatives, if applicable; and
 8. A description of any threats of conversion to non-forest uses, including any encumbrances on the property that prevent conversion to non-forest uses.

v. Information regarding the proposed establishment of a community forest, including:

1. A description of the benefiting community, including:
 - a. Demographics, such as race or socioeconomic status
 - b. Availability of and access to green spaces, and other vulnerabilities including health, economic, environmental and climate impacts faced by the community
 - c. A description of how the project benefits the community and the associated benefits.
2. A description of community involvement, including underrepresented communities, to-date in the planning of the community forest acquisition, including determining access and use of the forest, and the participation of different community groups anticipated in long-term management.
3. An identification of persons and organizations that support the project, a description of how they represent the greater population of the community benefiting from the establishment and management of the community forest, their specific role in establishing and managing the community forest; and

vi. Information regarding the proposed land acquisition, including:

1. A proposed project budget not exceeding \$600,000 and technical assistance needs as coordinated with the State Forester or equivalent Tribal government official (section § 230.6 of the final program rule);
2. The status of due diligence, including signed option or purchase and sale agreement, title search, minerals determination, and appraisal;

3. Description and status of cost share (secure, pending, commitment letter, etc.) (section § 230.6 of the final rule);
 4. The status of negotiations with participating landowner(s) including purchase options, contracts, and other terms and conditions of sale;
 5. The proposed timeline for completing the acquisition and establishing the community forest; and;
 6. Long term management costs and funding source(s).
- vii. Applications must comply with the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards also referred to as the Omni Circular (2 CFR part 200).

In order to assist applicants, a Community Forest Road Map can be found on the CFP website at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/community-forest/program>. The application guidance is located at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/application-guidance-revised.pdf> and the scoring guidance is at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/ScoringGuidance-revised.pdf>

5. Forest Service's Project Selection Criteria:

- a. Using the criteria described below, to the extent practicable, the Forest Service will give priority to applications that maximize the delivery of community benefits, as defined in the final rule (see section § 230.2 of the final rule); and
- b. The Forest Service will evaluate all applications received by the State Foresters or equivalent Tribal government officials and award grants based on the following criteria:
 - i. Type and extent of community benefits provided, including to underserved communities. Community benefits are defined in the final program rule as:
 1. Economic benefits, such as timber and non-timber products resulting from sustainable forest management, recreation and tourism;

2. Environmental benefits, including clean air and water, stormwater management, wildlife habitat, and cultural resources.
 3. Benefits from forest-based experiential learning, including K-12 conservation education programs; vocational education programs in disciplines such as forestry and environmental science; Traditional Ecological Knowledge; and environmental education through individual study or voluntary participation in programs offered by organizations such as 4-H, Boy or Girl Scouts, Master Gardeners, etc.;
 4. Benefits from serving as replicable models of effective forest stewardship for private landowners; and
 5. Recreational benefits such as hiking, hunting, and fishing secured through public access.
- ii. Extent and nature of community engagement, including participation by underserved communities, in the establishment and long-term management of the community forest;
 - iii. Amount of other funds leveraged;
 - iv. Costs to the Federal Government,
 - v. Extent to which the community forest contributes to any landscape conservation initiatives, as well as any applicable environmental justice initiatives;
 - vi. Extent of due diligence completed on the project, including cost share committed and status of appraisal and other due diligence costs;
 - vii. Likelihood that, unprotected, the property would be converted to non-forest uses; and
 - viii. Letters of support can accompany the application.

6. Grant Requirements:

- a. Once an application is selected, funding will be obligated to the grant recipient through a grant adhering to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards also referred to as the Omni Circular (2 CFR part 200).
- b. Forest Service must approve any amendments to a proposal or request to reallocate funding within a grant proposal. If negotiations on a selected project fail, the applicant cannot substitute an alternative site.
- c. The grant recipient must comply with the requirements in section § 230.8 in the final rule before funds will be released.
- d. After the project has closed, as a requirement of the grant, grant recipients will be required to provide the Forest Service with a Geographic Information System (GIS) shapefile: a digital, vector-based storage format for storing geometric location and associated attribute information, of CFP project tracts and cost share tracts, if applicable.
- e. Any funds not expended within the grant period must be de-obligated and revert to the Forest Service.
- f. All media, press, signage, and other documents discussing the creation of the community forest must reference the partnership and financial assistance by the Forest Service through the CFP.

Dated: March 6, 2023.

Jaelith Hall-Rivera,

Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry.

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